

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

Executive Registry

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Professor William W. Van Alstyne  
American Association of University Professors  
One Dupont Circle - Suite 500  
Washington, D. C. 20036

Dear Professor Van Alstyne:

I received your letter of May 4, 1976, concerning CIA relations with the academic community on the same day that you released it to the press and gave a press interview about it. The fact that you did not await a response from me before making your letter public is somewhat troubling. Unfortunately, your doing this could suggest to others that your purpose is something other than the resolution of the problem you perceive.

Having said that, I firmly reject your allegations that CIA corrupts American "colleges and universities by making political fronts of them," that they "are made conduits of deceit" and that "faculty members are paid to lie." These charges reflect your ignorance of the true nature of the relationships we now have with American educational institutions and their faculties. To issue a statement that I am taking "steps to end the exploitation of the academic community," as you request, would give credibility to the series of erroneous assumptions and allegations in your letter. Whatever you have heard about the past, I can assure you that there is now no reason for the members of your association to fear any threat to their integrity or their high sense of purpose from CIA.

The Agency has several kinds of relationships with scholars and scholarly institutions. They include negotiated contracts for scientific research and development, contracts for social science research on the many matters that affect foreign policy, paid and unpaid consultations between scholars and CIA research analysts, contacts with individuals who have travelled abroad, and other similar contacts that help us fulfill our primary responsibility; i.e., to provide the policy makers of our government with information and assessments of foreign developments.

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We seek the voluntary and witting cooperation of individuals who can help the foreign policy processes of the United States. Those who help are expressing a freedom of choice. Occasionally such relationships are confidential at our request, but more often they are discreet at the scholar's request because of his concern that he will be badgered by those who feel he should not be free to make this particular choice.

None of the relationships are intended to influence either what is taught or any other aspect of a scholar's work. We specifically do not try to inhibit the "free search for truth and its free exposition." Indeed, we would be foolish to do so, for it is the truth we seek. We know that we have no monopoly on fact or on understanding, and to restrict the search for the truth would be extremely detrimental to our own purposes. If CIA were to isolate itself from the good counsel of the best scholars in our country, we would surely become a narrow organization that could give only inferior service to the government. The complexity of international relations today requires that our research be strong, and we intend to keep it strong by seeking the best perspectives from inside and outside the government.

Your letter indicates a serious lack of confidence in people in your own profession--a view that I do not share; that is, your belief that your academic colleagues, including members of your association, would accept pay "to lie about the sources of their support, to mislead others, to induce betrayed confidences, to misstate the true objects of their interest, and to misrepresent the actual objectives of their work." It is precisely that kind of irresponsible charge that tends to drive responsible relationships away from openness and toward the secretiveness that you seem to abhor.

Finally, Professor Van Alstyne, the seriousness of your charges demands that we find a way toward better understanding. Because we owe that to both our organizations, I invite you to meet with a few senior officials of this Agency for that purpose.

Sincerely,

/s/ George Bush

George Bush  
Director